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The Recurrent Funeral

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SECOND PRIZE POETRY

David Weir

THE RECURRENT FUNERAL

In silent life I lie and look at them:
 Pale shadows stumbling about in dark light
 Are they, howling out some horrible hymn,
 While stained radiance streams in, stinging bright--
 Filling and flooding, kissing all but me--
 For I am dead and beginning to reek
 The pleasant fragrance of finality.
 I watch the men weep tears down inside cheek,
 While the women morn their open sorrow.
 With surface sadness I see my Love cry,
 Knowing that before the dawn of tomorrow
 The torrent of her tears will ice-hard dry
 In the torpid embrace of intercourse.
 Mankind's Claudius will be the new friend
 Who will stroke her locks with a rhythmic force,
 And push a child into the same dull end
 That I have found--and I am cracked in half.
 Heads low, looking down toward Satan they are,
 While I in inverse prayer look up and laugh
 At their hollow words uttered from afar.

Though solemn ceremony still they run,
Meditating thoughts of pitiful praise.
Before they say "Amen" the prayer is done,
And next they eulogize my wrinkled days.

With false laurels of fine speech I am crowned,
The words fall hard upon my broken brow;
And happy am I when an end is found
To the worthless words, though again they bow

One last time, and then forget forever.
I want to cry out, but my dry throat warps
Silent screams into nothing; for never
A sound comes from a melancholy corpse.

Now the sextet calls and bears me away,
And I am dropped inside the dark wet walls.
The thudding dirt blots out the sky and day
As I am captured in the lab'rinth halls

That wind throughout the universal earth.
A foetus walled within the coffin's womb,
Once again I'm silent, awaiting birth
In embryonic darkness of the tomb...

And now it comes. Upon my rotting eye
Life-giving worms gnaw nourishment from me--
They grow, and grow, and even try to fly,
But bloom instead into a bright blond tree.

Now I and Nature in seance are one--

I entwine my bones, though the eons pass,

With fertile Willendorfs of soil and sun.

I erupt triumphant from the black grass,

Roll back the boulder of defeated death;

I take from myself, as also I give...

Victorious, I draw anew my breath;

And, in diurnal resurrection--Live!

Shadow cloaks a wary muse,

But soon infant emanation issues

And sudden could ripe

So frightening

Through stillness of a lethe-lake,

That all is jarred alive

And quick words capture thoughts before they dive

Into some other

Silent curse...

And as the world sleeps cold awakes

Is an eternal lull,

A wind sends the mind swirling from the skull

Into another

Universe--